



cover: arqdyke (tumblr)
pg1: trickyhofnarr (tumblr)
pg2: buggbrain (tumblr)
pg3: doggy909 (tumblr)
pg4: momocup (tumblr)
pg5: zayn-darkshadow (tumblr)
pg6: nromal (tumblr)
pg7: buggbrain (tumblr)
pg8: starlit-bawka (tumblr)
pg9: beescake (tumblr)
pg10: trickyhofnarr (tumblr)
pg11: m0rbldspade (twit & insta)
pg12: momocup (tumblr)
pg13: controversialcoven (tumblr)
pg14: anthonybourdainssidechick (tumblr)
pg15: emo_grinch (tumblr)
pg16: waddledoodledee (tumblr)
pg17: doggy909 (tumblr)
pg18: chirriechi (tumblr)
pg19: autisticaradiamegido (tumblr)
pg20: beescake (tumblr)
pg21-27: HaroThar(ao3)/imhereformyscienefriends (tumblr)
pg28: arqdyke (tumblr)
pg29: angellfag (tumblr)
pg30: jelli-art (tumblr)
pg31: enivlens (tumblr)
pg32: angellfag (tumblr)
pg33: thunderstruckcincerary (tumblr)
pg34: enivlens (tumblr)
pg35: jelli-art (tumblr)
pg36: kittykat-pikachu (tumblr)
pg37: waddledoodledee (tumblr)
pg38: dykefish (tumblr)
pg39: tzatwar (tumblr)
pg40: starlit-bawka (tumblr)
pg41: gillbuoy (tumblr)



trickyhofnarr (tumblr) - portula!



buggbrain (tumblr) - meenkri!



doggy909 (tumblr) - meukri!



momocup (tumblr) - dammeu!



zayn-darkshadow (tumblr) - nepsol!



nromal (tumblr) - gamfef!



buggbrain (tumblr) - solrezi!



starlit-bawka (tumblr) - nepkat!



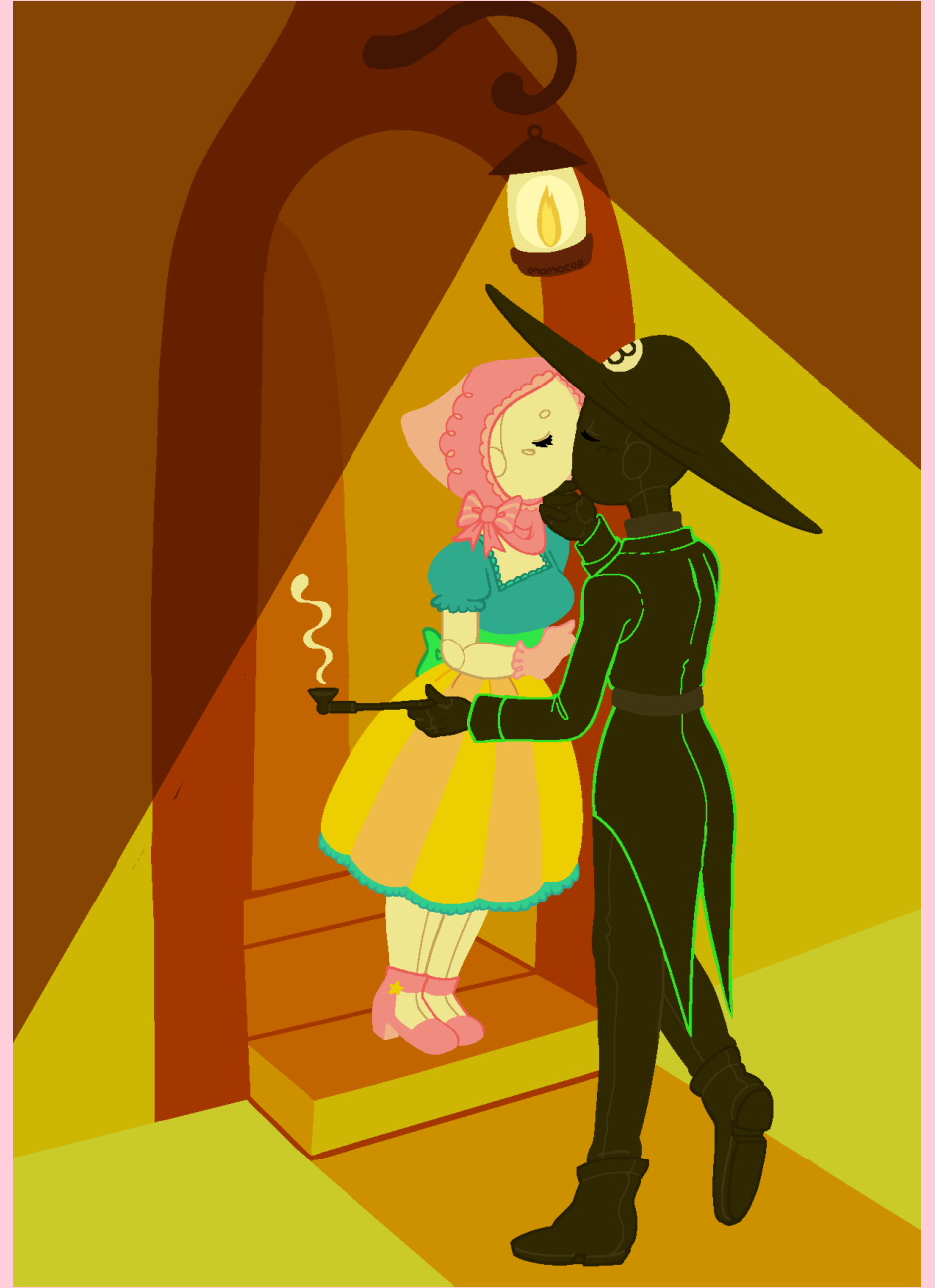
beescake (tumblr) - aravris!



trickyhofnarr (tumblr) - arafefnep!



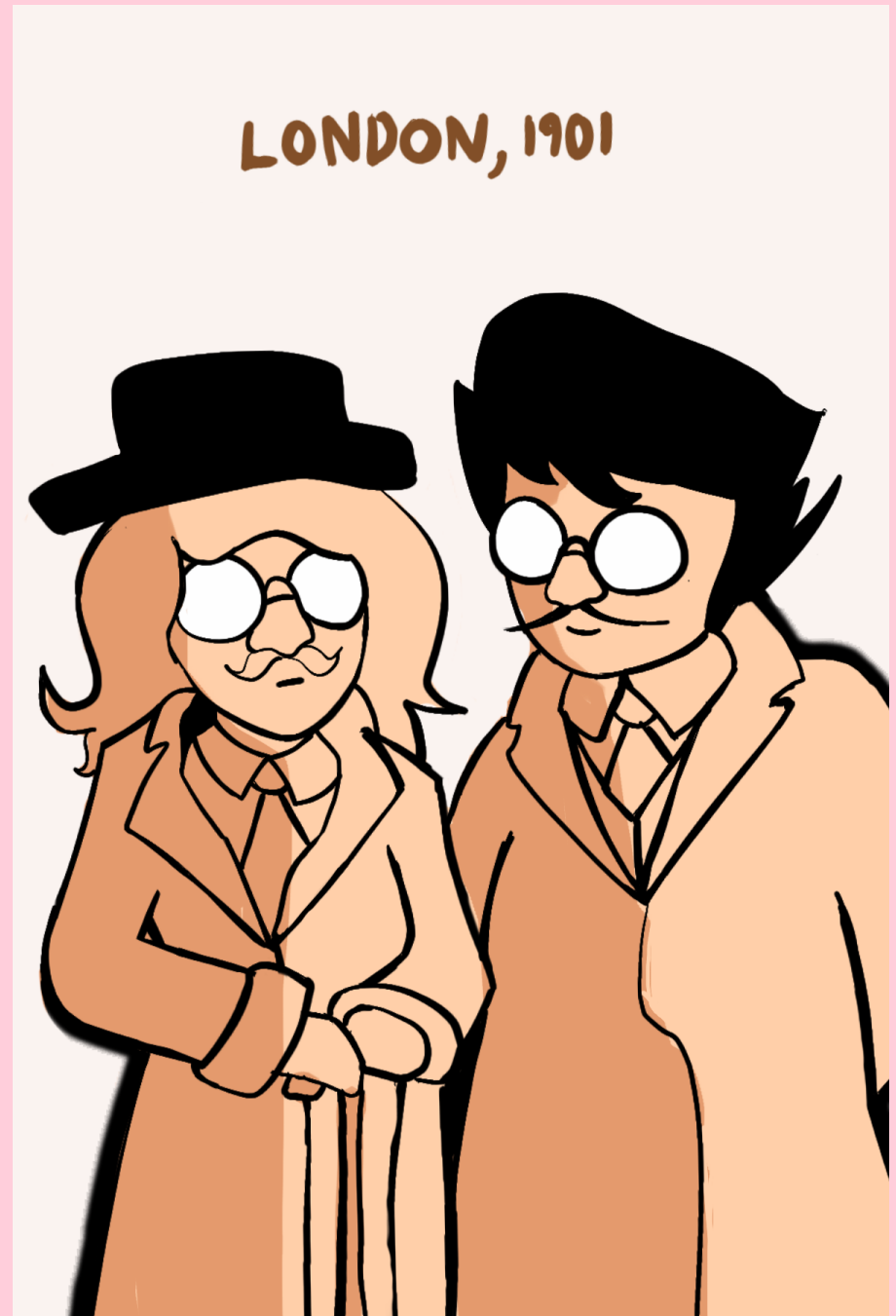
m0rbldspade (twt & insta) - signmaid!



momocup (tumblr) - snowpaint!



controversialCoven (tumblr) - junedirk!



anthonybourdainssidechick (tumblr) - jakeroxy!



emo_grinch (tumblr) - dirknep!



waddledoodledee (tumblr) - araroxy!



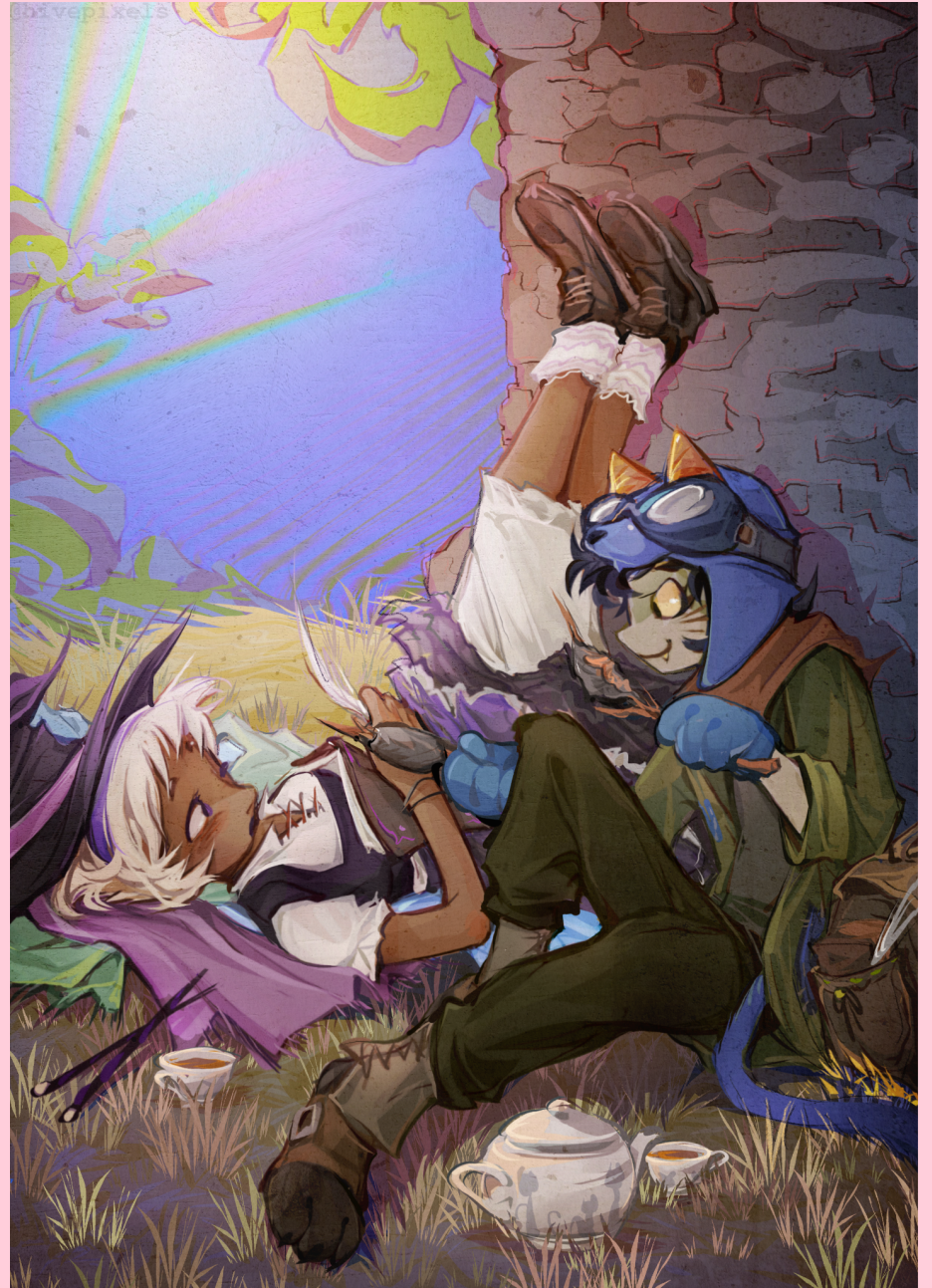
doggy909 (tumblr) - eriroxy!



chirriechi (tumblr) - jadenep!



autisticaradiamegido (tumblr) - arajade!



beescake (tumblr) - neprose!

The Princess's Shadow

You are in the garden with the princess, standing between a tall, arching trellis of wisteria and a rose bush so fluffy and manicured you could perhaps theorize the gardeners intend to make a pillar out of it. The ladies take no note of you, of course, because you are a lowly servant unworthy of their attention, and because you are, in specific, exceptionally good at fading into the background. Most people reach a level of anonymity when moving through a crowd, those around them making no note of them except to move right or left to avoid collision, unable to recount what the person looked like if they were held at spearpoint.

For you, that's just your daily life. In crowds, even the most talented of assassins searching for you specifically would never be able to pick you out.

It is a magic that your princess has made use of often. Your casual un-presence can be extended, if you will it to be, though the range is short. You are, as a result, intimately familiar with what it feels like to have your princess tucked up against your side, under your arm, tittering with fluttering earfins and dimpled cheeks, hanging off of you in manners so scandalous you will one day expire from it. You have yet to tell her no, though.

You cannot tell her no for anything.

It is why you know how pleasant the curve of her waist feels underneath your palm. It is why you know what her hair smells like. It is why you know

that despite her looks, she is quite muscular beneath the ruffles and the lace. It is why you know that she is a terrible whisperer, and would have most certainly gotten caught had you not attended her on her little outings.

And perhaps that is why you continue to go with her, despite your many, frequent, and repeated protests. You do try, after all, you try to remind her that she is a princess and that you are her knight, that there is a level of propriety that you both must uphold, that a princess should not sneak out of her castle to traipse about long past when her queen expects her for supper. You tell her each and every time she pulls you aside with a giggle and two cloaks hung over her arm. She has the most intoxicating way of dismissing your concerns.

You know it is wrong, of course. To want what you want. That you could never, and will never have it. That it is scandalous and inappropriate of you to even want it. You are improper for even acknowledging such wants. But it is hard, not to desire her, when she is so beautiful and spirited and grins like fire on the horizon. When she is as powerful and beautiful as the ocean itself. You deny yourself your own feelings most strongly, but it is hard, still.

She has leashed her power, her magnitude, for now. Sitting in the garden, cup of tea in hand, she looks entirely at ease, perfectly within her element gossiping and laughing and subtly prodding the ladies of the court for information. It is a delicate dance, you know, from your many

observations, the way Princess Feferi so surreptitiously prompts the women around her into telling her little secrets, small truths, tidbits and parcels of valuable information which she will meticulously piece together, and from this network her vast wealth of knowledge is born. And, not only can she conduct something so subtle and complex, but she also does genuinely entertain her company whilst doing so. It is a dance too intricate for someone of your ilk to follow, and yet you cannot look away.

Not that you would. She is your princess, yours to guard and protect. You were not selected for this role without reason, after all, your patience for merely standing and staring notwithstanding. You are strong, and you are swift, and you have yet to encounter an adversary you could not best. To overwhelm your opponent with sheer strength alone is not exactly the wittiest strategy, but it is one that has not failed you. And if it is to keep your princess safe, you do not doubt that you could topple mountains with such motivation.

The women all rise when their princess does, parasols knocked over their shoulders and dresses swishing in a beautiful cadence. You follow, as you are meant, a few paces behind, and nobody takes any note of you, as you are meant. You may as well be the princess's shadow, at this point, for how silent, unnoticed, and everpresent you are.

The women disperse, and then it is just you and your princess, alone. To be unchaperoned with a man would be ill suited for her reputation, which

she takes meticulous care of, but those who know of you know that you are far too honorable to ever besmirch her in any way, and those who do not know of you will barely recognize that you are there, even if they should see you.

And it is in that isolation, here amongst the flowers, that you see your princess drop her facade.

"Oof!" she grunts, lifting her arms high above her head and stretching with a little groan. The billowing sleeves of her dress slip down, revealing a length of freckled grey skin that makes your mouth feel dry, and then she drops her arms and twists her head to cast a smile at you over her shoulder, and the rest of you becomes suddenly, instantly wet.

"It's beautiful out," she tells you, a giggle in her voice like winds atop the waves. She takes your arm in both of hers and cozies up against your side, and habit has you extending your un-presence across her without even thinking about it. "Let's go *actually* enjoy the gardens!"

"Your Highness," you protest stiffly, sweating through the starched collar of your garb, "this is highly inappropriate."

"Yeah, but you like it," she says with all confidence, smiling at you like she thinks you're silly. Like she thinks you're cute.

"It is—I am not—"

She drags you forwards, and you do not resist her. You cannot resist her. Though she is strong, your strength outpaces her, and if you were to resist you would not take a single step, but there is not even an ounce within you that is capable of telling her no. You will do everything she says.

The thought makes you sweat even more.

She does not shy away from your touch, despite the sweat. Indeed, she slots herself neatly against your side, arms entwined with your own as though you were a nobleman worthy of escorting her and not merely her guard and shield. Her hair brushes sweetly against your shoulder and her horn bobs dangerously close in your peripheral vision, though you know she is far too composed and in control of herself to ever risk poking you in the eye.

You melt for her. Of course you do.

"You seemed to be enjoying yourself," you note, fully aware that this is the mark of your acquiescence, and she giggles and lifts up onto her toes so she can gently knock her horn against your own affectionately.

"I was! It's nice to have it over with though. Regardless of how fun it is, it's also tiring."

You are familiar with such things. There is one cuddled to your side and walking the gardens with you right now.

She speaks to you of her pride at gently pulling information from her companions, her opinions on the tea and food, at one point darts from your side to go catch a butterfly gently between two cupped palms and returns to show it to you. It is a beautiful, vibrant blue. That she chose that color of butterfly specifically, when there are dozens if not hundreds of other butterflies and pollinators buzzing about the royal gardens, makes you sweat again.

She laughs at you, releasing the butterfly in favor of wrapping two locks of your hair around her palms and wrists, pulling you down as though by a winch. It isn't necessary; you would stoop for her at any moment if she asked. You would gladly kneel before her if she wanted. But the act of forcing you lower by her own giggling whims makes you flustered, and it is hard to reprimand her when you are kept quite busy suppressing your own shudder at her command of you.

"My pretty knight," she coos when your face is level with hers, and you are perspiring enough that the gardeners might not even need to water the flowers today.

She releases your hair in favor of cupping your jaw, stroking light claws over your cheeks, and you know what she intends.

"Princess, we mustn't," you protest weakly, despite the raw want in your voice.

"And why mustn't we? I've wanted you for such a long time, Equius, and I *know* you want me too."

"Princess," you rasp, as she leans in, and stops a breath away from your own lips.

She pauses, and you are in agony. You wish with fevered need that she would finish the action, press her mouth against your own and allow you to drown in the indulgent debauchery of kissing the one you most covet. You wish for guards to burst forth from the bushes and lock you away forever for your presumption. You wish she would giggle and mock you for thinking you would ever be worthy of kissing one such as herself, make you kneel on the dirt path and kiss her boots in repentance. She does none of that.

Merely sighs, and pulls away from you, and your agony for some reason does not abate.

"Alright, Equius," she says, and you could cull yourself for making her sound so wistful. "But I'm not giving up yet! Someday I'm gonna have you begging for it, just you wait and see."

Oh, if only she knew.

But it isn't your place. Your place is behind her, guarding her, keeping her safe, not entertaining such wild and atrocious fantasies. You are merely her shadow, trailing always after her.

HaroThar (ao3) / imhereformysciencefriends (tumblr)
- fefquius!



arqdyke (tumblr) - halquius!



angellfag (tumblr) - karkan!



jelli-art (tumblr) - solkarezi!



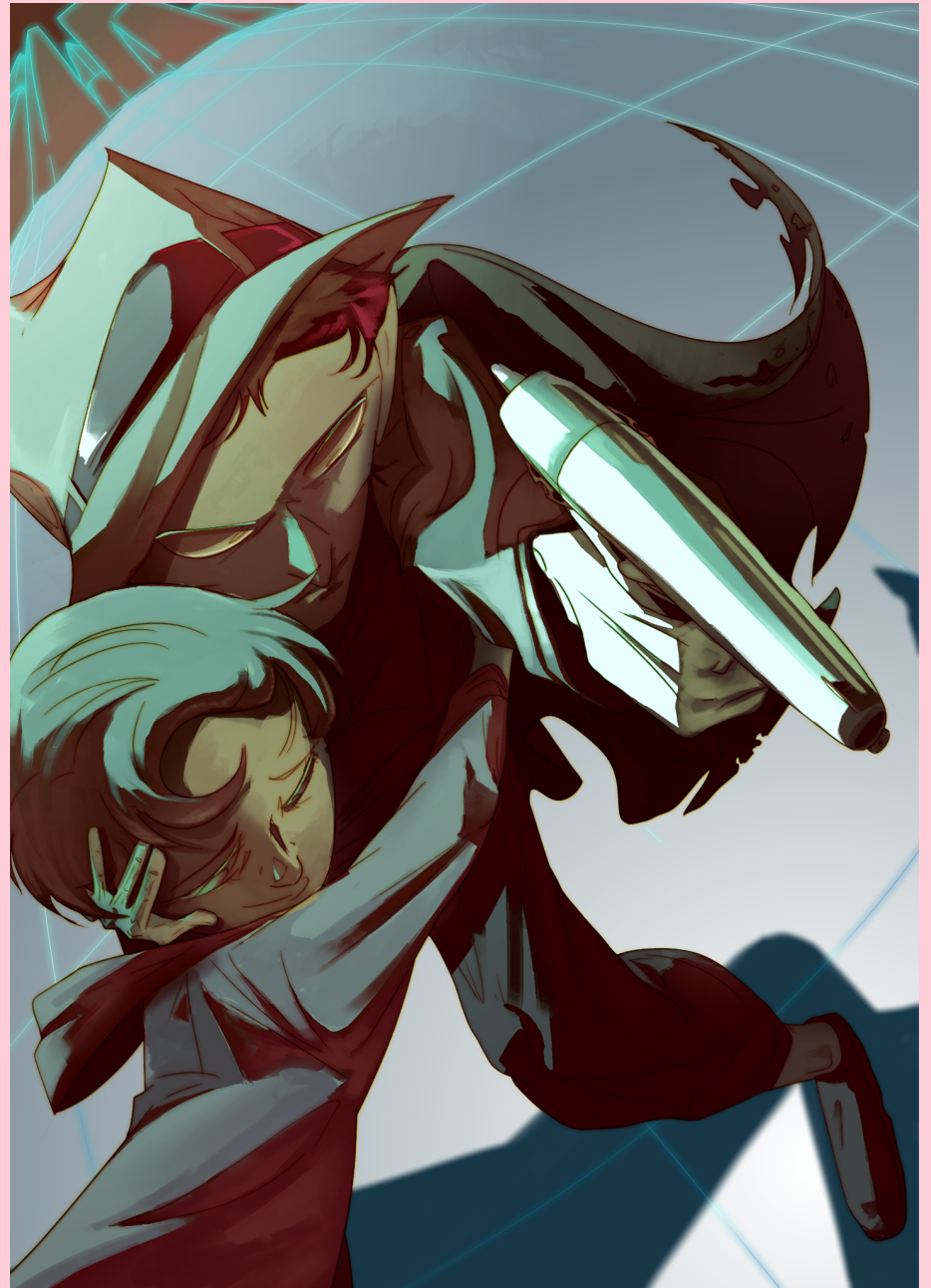
enivlens (tumblr) - gamrezi!



angellfag (tumblr) - equikat!



thunderstruckcincerary (tumblr) - damaruss!



enivlens (tumblr) - slickpaint!



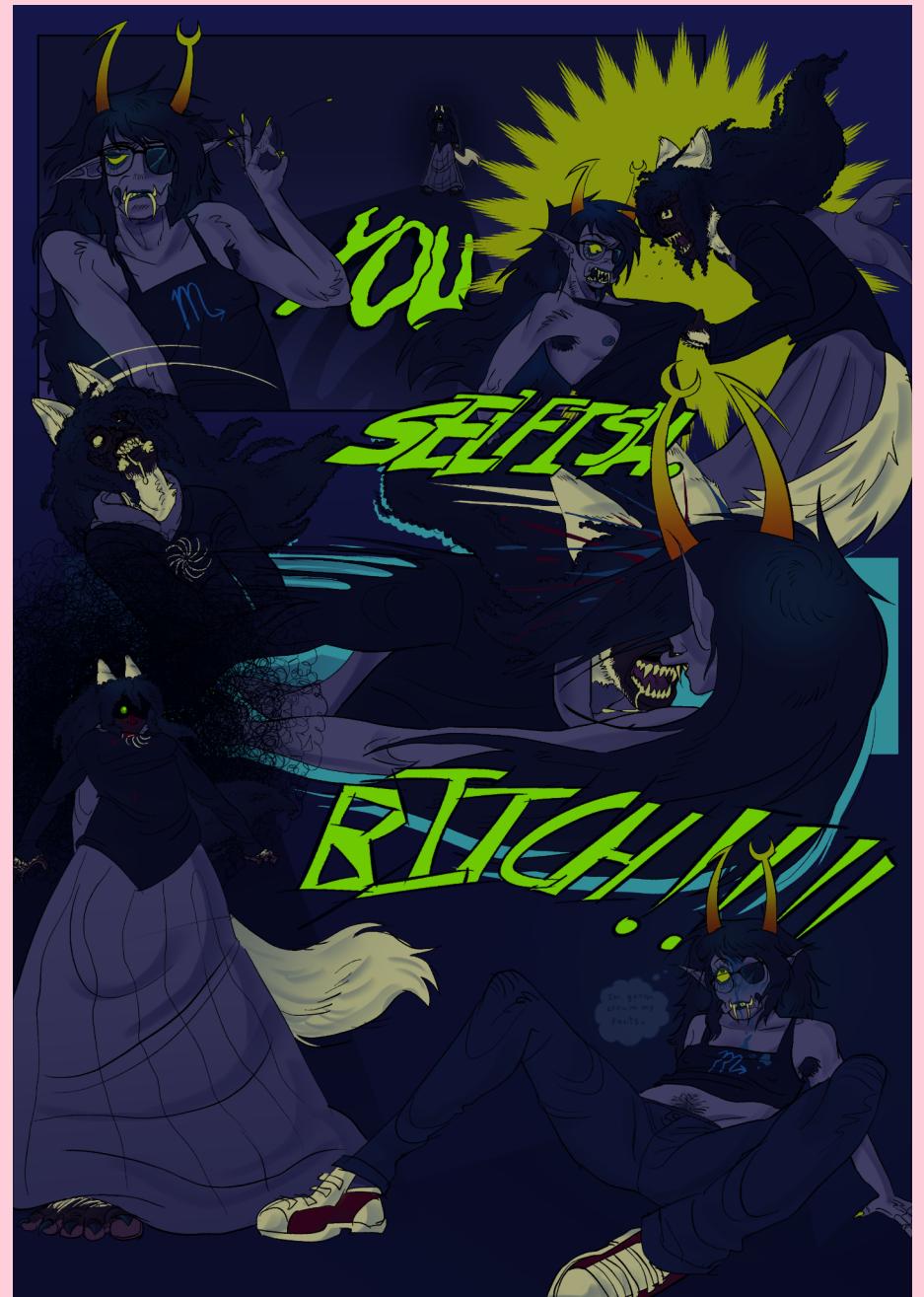
jelli-art (tumblr) - dirkjane!



kittykat-pikachu (tumblr) - davejake!



waddledoodledee (tumblr) - davris!



dykefish (tumblr) - vrisjade!



tzatwar (tumblr) - erirose!



starlit-bawka (tumblr) - davesol!



gillbuoy - dirkfefuu!